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ABSTRACT

The background and the organization of the reading internship run by Oakland Schools (Michigan) are briefly described. The eight-week program provides training for elementary and secondary teachers from constituent school districts, which enables them to function as reading support personnel. Areas of study include reading theory and methodolgoy, diagnosis and evaluation, and prescriptive planning to meet student needs through diagnostic testing. (AA)

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THE INTERNSHIP MODEL FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

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(Session: Secondary Reading Personnel, Thursday, May 13, 1976, 9:00-11:45 A.M.)

Oakland Schools is an intermediate district, a regional educational service agency created by Michigan state law to carry out certain legal functions at the direction of the State Department of Education. Under state law an intermediate district performs functions which might not be feasible individual district undertakings because they involve such a small percentage of children or require such a high degree of staff specialization. An intermediate district is permitted also to complement and enhance functions of a constituent district so long as the operation is handled in a manner that does not undermine district integrity in any way. The staff, which serves twenty-eight constituent school districts, includes multi-disciplinary curriculum and school management specialists with the highest academic credentials. These specialists are backed by sophisticated technological and media resources and are charged with staying at the developing edge of their profession.

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Ten professionals comprise the Intermediate District Reading and Language Center staff. Four members function solely as consultants working mainly in school districts with teaching personnel. Three clinicians provide direct help to children experiencing unusual difficulty learning to read and their teachers. In addition to staff members already cited an overall director of the center, an assistant director who also supervises the clinical services, and a director of the internship complete the group.

The reading internship was developed as a consequence of the sense of urgency of the last several decades about finding better ways to teach reading. With the problems of the cities and pressures of different sort in suburbia causing large numbers of children to limp through school with substandard skills or drop out the internship emerged as a viable means of providing teachers with greater expertise. The original plan of operation was simple. The Center just offered districts the opportunity to request that teaching personnel work at Oakland Schools for extended periods of time to become more skilled at teaching reading. Sessions ranged from two weeks to a full year in duration with the Intermediate District providing at least partial reimbursement toward the cost of a substitute when necessary.

The Reading and Language Center staff was smaller at first. Every member was available for every job. Working with teachers or children, in districts or at the Center, was usually a joint effort. This made it easy to work with trainees. They simply were included in whatever activities, clinical or consultant, were being carried on at a particular time. Background or training was provided when needed. As local funds began to be augmented by the infusion of federal, state, and private foundation money the demand for Intermediate District services mushroomed beyond the ability of the staff to meet it. Among the first new personnel to be added was a director of clinical services thus

forcing a distinction to be drawn between clinicians and consultants. With the total staff no longer acting as a unit it became increasingly difficult to organize a comprehensive program. Someone was needed to interact with consultants and clinicians and to be responsible for coordinating training activities. When such a coordinator was designated the internship became a separate entity.

The aim of the program that has evolved is to provide background and training for elementary and secondary teachers that will enable them to function as reading support personnel in their school districts. Attention is directed to developmental and remedial diagnostic procedures with emphasis on the developmental. Participation requires that candidates be released from district duties for an eight-week period so that they may attend sessions daily at Oakland Schools. Districts are reimbursed at the rate of $25.00 a day toward the cost of a substitute for the entire period.

Although many are responsible for the teaching of reading, most secondary teachers have never had a reading course. Therefore the first segment of the session is devoted almost exclusively to reading theory and methodology. Knowledge of materials is included but only as that knowledge can be related to processes important to the development of a mature reader. The goal is to help teachers to understand what specifically they can hope to accomplish when they use particular materials for instruction. Components of the reading process are analyzed in depth. Skills of word recognition, comprehension, content reading, and study are considered and methods of teaching each explored.

A second area dealt with extensively is that of reading diagnosis and evaluation. While some interns move into resource room or consultant positions after attending the internship most continue as classroom teachers. Since the informal reading inventory (IRI) is easy to learn and adaptable to available

materials for use in the classroom, that and other informal instruments have proven to be the most serviceable tools. However, standardized instruments are also explored and data obtained from the two types is carefully analyzed and contrasted. Observation of clinical procedures and diagnostic practice round out this phase of the program.

Prescriptive planning to meet student needs identified through diagnostic testing and teaching is the concept receiving major stress. Attention is given to every phase of reading instruction. Materials may be selected or developed. For secondary interns strategies for adapting content area reading demands to meet the requirements and limited skills of disabled readers also is emphasized. Establishing working relationships with other content area teachers and the student's counselor must be part of the planning procedure, too.

Pre and post testing of intern knowledge and skills, evaluations by interns and participating districts, plus follow up work with former trainees all indicate a record of success for the program. Twenty-two of the twenty-eight constituent districts have participated with the request for places exceeding those available each year. Breadth of staff, services, and professional instructional materials available are undoubtedly the strength of this program.